

The Megillah of Esther

An Original English Rendition

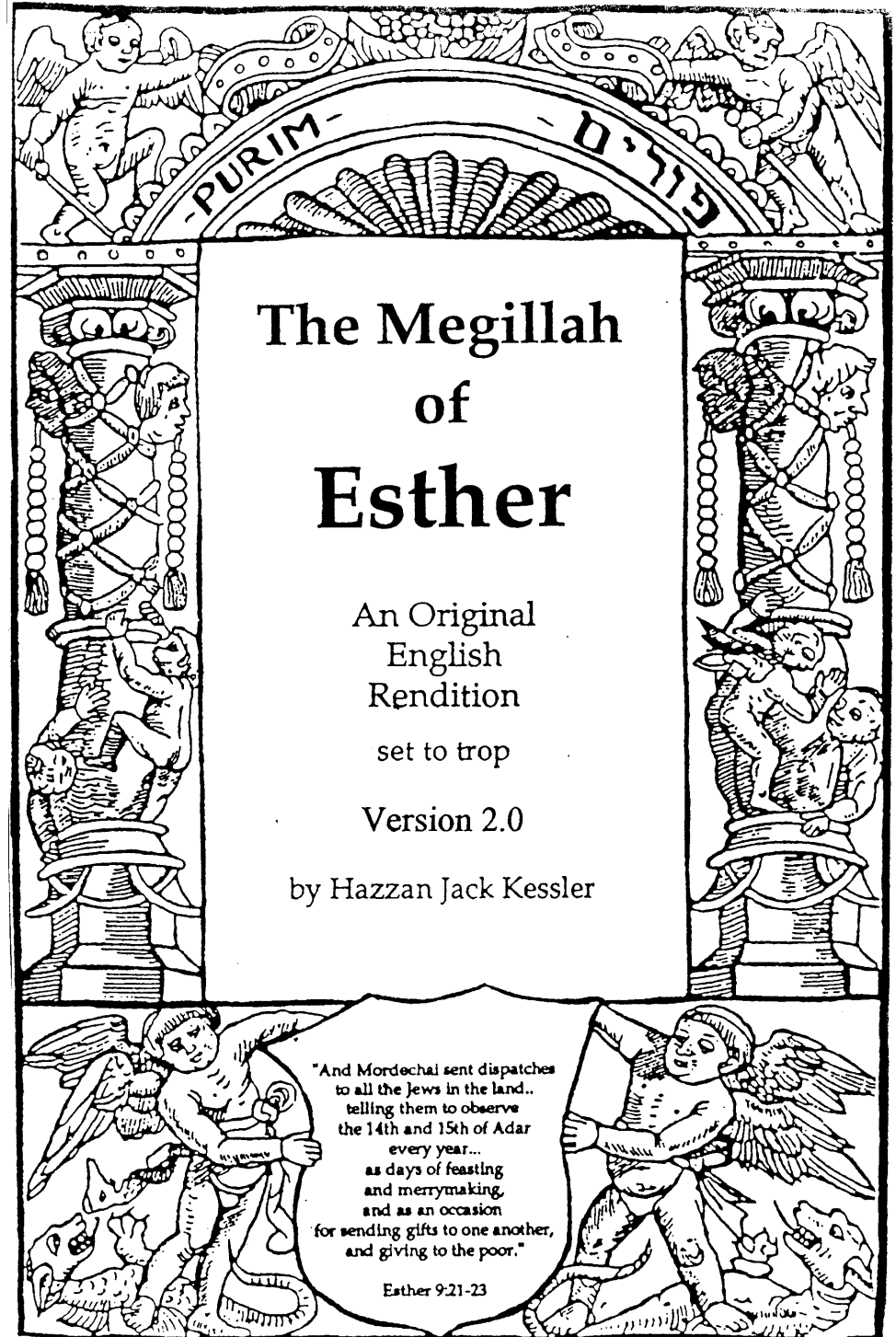
Our Jewish heritage is as rich treasury of the accumulated wisdom (and wit) of the many centuries of our remarkable history. One of the greatest challenges facing the contemporary Jewish community outside Israel is that of making this heritage accessible, in light of the language barrier posed by classical Hebrew.

A successful formula employed by a growing number of congregations and havurot is the singing of Biblical texts – Torah, Haftarat, and Megillot – in English which has been set to Trop, the ancient melodic chant system for these texts. For many, this is an ideal way to communicate the meaning of the Hebrew text.

This setting of Megillat Esther is an imaginative, humorous rendition of the story of Purim. Sing it entirely in English, or do it in sections alternating this English with Hebrew.

This Megillah encourages involvement! The English text is simple and fun for all ages. The goal is to make Purim, well, Purim: lots of *meshugass*, with the underlying message that it's just flat-out great to be Jewish!

Hazzan Jack Kessler



Blessings Before the Megillah

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתַי וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִקְרָא מְגִלָּה.

*Baruch Ata Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'Olam asher
kidshanu b'mitsvotav v'tsivanu al mikra Megilla*

Blessed be You, Adonai, our God, Master of the
Cosmos, who makes us holy through your
mitsvot, and the reading of this Megilla.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמַּן הַזֶּה:

*Baruch Ata Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'Olam she'asa
nisim la'avotenu bayamim hahem bazman hazeh*

Blessed be You, Adonai, our God, Master of the
Cosmos, who has done great things for our
ancestors, in their days, at this time.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהֵחֵינּוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמַּן הַזֶּה:

*Baruch Ata Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'Olam she-
hech'yanu v'kimanu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh*

Blessed be You, Adonai, our God, Master of the
Cosmos, who gives us life, strength, and the
gift of this happy time!

Once upon a time, in the time of Ahash'verōsh
Now this was the Ahash'verōsh whose empire
extended all the way from India to Ethiopia:

In the third year of his reign
in the capital city of Shushan
he threw a huge party for all his ministers
and his chief servants.....

just to impress them with his fantastic wealth
and greatness

This party lasted seven full days:

Everyone had all they could eat and drink
from beautiful golden dishes
including some the invaders took
from our holy Temple:

The festivities went on and on and on and on and on:
And on the seventh day

when the king was pretty drunk
he called for Queen Vashti
to dance before the whole crowd
dressed in only her crown ❖
Now Vashti was no coward but when she refused
the king's rage boiled over ❖
Vashti was fired as queen
and banished from Shushan forever ❖
Not long afterward when the king sobered up
he wondered what to do for a new queen ❖
His ministers advised him to have a beauty contest
so the most gorgeous woman in the whole empire
would be his new queen ❖
And so Mordechai the Jew sent his niece Esther
to try out for the job
And Esther was the most beautiful of all

so she became queen of the Persian empire ❖
Esther was careful and didn't tell anyone
that she was a Jew ❖
Her uncle Mordechai would sit outside the palace
to keep in touch with Esther ❖
Now just in case you think
that this is the end of the story
hang on-- there's a lot to come ❖
One day Mordechai heard two guards
plotting to murder the king ❖
Mordechai reported what he had heard
and the king's life was saved ❖
For this nobody thanked him
but his name was written in the king's records ❖
Sometime after all these happenings
the king appointed a new Prime Minister ❖

His name was *Haman*

The king's new minister had a very big ego
and loved to have people bow down to him ❖
One day he and his officers passed by Mordechai
who as usual was sitting by the palace gate ❖
but Mordechai refused to bow down to *Haman*

When the officers told him to bow down
Mordechai said: I am a Jew
and I don't bow to anyone but my God
I serve the Holy One
and this makes me free ❖

Haman was absolutely furious
and went to the king and said:
O your Highness, Beloved and Mighty
and Fantastic and Awesome King

I have bad news for you ❖

There is a people

scattered throughout your Empire

that doesn't follow your laws ❖

Now this is terrible! But I can take care of them

If you give me the OK I'll waste them

and they'll never bother you again

I'll even bring in some more money

for your treasury ❖

And the king said: sounds fine to me
gei gesunde-heit

do what you want with these people

Now leave me alone--

I've got a date with the Queen ❖

And so all the days of the year
were written on pieces of paper
and put in a box
and one piece was taken out by *Haman*
This would be the day
that all the Jews would be killed ❖
And so the news went out by express riders
to all parts of the empire
to kill all the Jews
men, women and children
rich, poor, young and old
on the fourteenth day of Adar
now that's tonight ❖
Also a special gallows was built
to hang the Jew Mordechai
who wouldn't bow down to *Haman*

Now when the Jews heard this
they thought they were doomed for sure
but Mordechai got a message to Esther ❖
He said: You have a chance
to change the course of history
Go for it! Go talk to the king!
This may be the work of the Holy One of Israel
You may have become queen
just so you'd have the chance
to save your people ❖

Now Esther was terrified
because if she went to the king
without being invited
the king might get mad and kill her
but she decided to do it ❖

So Esther dressed in her snappiest low-cut queen outfit,
and she walked into the throne room, uninvited.
She went up to the king on his throne
and she went down on her knees,
and the king was glad to see her ;
And the king said, (dramatic pause)
"Esther baby! Good to see you!
You look great! What can I give you?
Ask for anything, you can have it,
up to 50 percent of the whole kingdom." ♦
Queen Esther said: "my King, I'd like you to come
to a special little party in my part of the palace
just you and me, dear king
and oh yes, just for fun
please bring *Haman*"

That night, the king had insomnia. ♦
So he called for the court records to be read out loud,
so that he could be bored to sleep. ♦





The story was told of how Mordecai reported
on the plot against the king
The king said, "wait a minute, this guy saved my life,
and we never did anything for him?"
think, think, think, think, think, think, think.
ok, no good ideas. is anybody else around?"
and *Haman* by coincidence just happened
to be hanging around
near the king's chambers in the middle of the night
so the king called him in and asked,
"What should be done for a man
the king has decided to honor?"
and *Haman*, in his typical self-absorbed
narcissistic way of thinking,
thought: *he must mean me!*
so he said: "such a man should be dressed
in the king's robes,
and sat upon the king's best horse,

and paraded through the city,

led by someone who calls out, over and over:

“This is a man the king is delighted to honor.”

So the king said:

“Excellent idea! do it for the Jew Mordecai!

You will be the one to lead the horse through the streets!

Make it so! so let it be written, so let it be done!”

And so: the next night, after the end

of a very, very, very long day,

Haman dragged himself home,

and told the whole pathetic story to his wife and followers.

His wife said: “What?

and you wanna whack *this* guy?

Are you outta your mind? fuggedaboutit!

This is not a coincidence!

This dude is nothing but trouble!

His karma will run over your dogma!”

But at that very moment,

the king's guards came knocking on the door
(make banging noises)

to escort *Haman* to that fateful dinner

And so the king and *Haman* went to Esther's party:

the king was in a good mood, and said to Esther:

“Tell me, dear Queen, what do you want now?

It shall be my royal command.”

And Esther cried out: “Save my life!

Someone is trying to murder me

and all my people!

Save me, save me, O please please save me!”

And the king shouted: “Who? What? Where?

Who could do such a terrible thing?”

And Esther said: This one! This Evil One – *HAMAN*

Now the Evil One could see that he had a problem

and bowed down to beg for mercy

but he just happened to trip

over Esther's gown -- pulling it down
and he landed right on top of Esther
and the king said "what? how dare you
try to make whoopee with the Queen?
get your hands off the royal assets
boy you in a heap of trouble"
He gave orders and guards came with handcuffs
and chains and very unfriendly expressions
and took away *Haman*
At that moment, just by coincidence,
one of the king's ministers came in and said:
"Excuse me, your Majesty,
What do you want to do with the gallows
out in front of the palace,
that were built for the Jew Mordecai,
the one who saved your life?"
And Esther said: "Wait a minute - he's my uncle!"

Then the king said: "What? No more mister nice guy
use the gallows to hang *HAMAN*

Now the story's not quite over
The king didn't like to change his orders
once he'd given them
so the order to kill all the Jews
was still in force

But Esther begged and pleaded
and the king gave the order
that the Jews could defend themselves
so that when their enemies
came to attack them
the Jews survived by fighting back
Then the king made Mordechai his prime minister
And gave him a very snazzy palace of his own
Which incidentally had belonged to *HAMAN*

And so almost everybody lived

happily ever after

Now what can we learn from all this?

As it is written in the books of the Wise Ones

coincidence is God's way of staying anonymous

and if you come to a fork in the road

you should definitely take it

At the end of the day

when we take off the masks we wear for the world

Who are we really?

We can all be Mordechai

We can all be Esther

(all rise)

Stand up for justice

Don't bow to evil

We serve the Holy One

and this makes us free! ♦

Blessings after the Megillah

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הָרַב אֶת רִיבֵנוּ וְהִדָּן אֶת דֵּינֵנוּ
וְהַנּוֹקֵם אֶת נַקְמָתֵנוּ
וְהַמְשַׁלֵּם גְּמוּלָה לְכָל אוֹיְבֵי נַפְשֵׁנוּ
וְהַנִּפְרָע לָנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי הַנִּפְרָע לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִכָּל צָרֵיהֶם הָאֵל הַמּוֹשִׁיעַ:

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheynu Melech ha-Olam

Harav et riveynu v'ha-dan et dineynu

v'ha-nokeym et nik'mateynu

v'ha-m'shaleym g'mul l'chol oy'vey nafsheyynu

v'ha-nifra lanu mi-tzareynu.

Baruch Ata Adonai ha-nifra l'amo Yisrael

mi-kol tzarey-hem, ha-El ha-moshia.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Master of the Cosmos,

Who helps us in our struggles,

Who brings our enemies to justice.

Blessed are You Adonai, by whose power

Your people Israel is delivered from all enemies.

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